



# South Shore Blueway Trail Stakeholder Meeting Summary



Thursday, April 4, 2013 6:00 – 8:00 PM  
Freeport Recreation Center

The stakeholder meeting, held at Freeport Recreation Center, began at 6:00 pm. Kyle Rabin, Blueway Trail Advisory Committee Chair opened by thanking the Village of Freeport and Mayor Kennedy for hosting the event. He recognized Nora Sudars for coordinating the room setup. Kyle introduced Freeport Mayor Robert Kennedy. Village of Freeport Mayor Kennedy welcomed the crowd voicing his support of the Blueway Trail and announcing the removal to barriers to provide greater kayak and canoe access at Waterfront Park. He emphasized the importance of safety on the water and the value of placing an identification sticker on paddlecraft in the event the canoe or kayak is found adrift. The Coast Guard Auxiliary provides the free identification stickers through the “Paddle Smart” program at safe boating classes and other boating events.

Kyle Rabin talked about the chronology of the project and funding. Kyle acknowledged Dennis Mildner of the New York State Department of State, Brian Schneider from the Nassau County Department of Public Works (who was not able to attend; Nassau County Press Secretary Michael Martino represented the county), and the South Shore Blueway Advisory Committee members in attendance, including Nora Sudars, Tara Schneider, Mike Fehling, Steve McDonald, Rob Weltner, and Ken Fink, and Brian Vander Veer and Sean Jordan from the Town of Oyster Bay.

Zhennya Slootskin, Going Coastal, Inc. and David Berg, Cameron Engineering & Associates gave an overview of the blueway planning and site selection process. Nassau County Legislator David Denenberg spoke about his early support for funding the Blueway Trail, when it was a nominated project under the 2006 Environmental Bond Act Program, and joined participants in the mapping session.

**Focus on Mapping Break-Out Session:** Zhennya explained the workshop activities to participants, which consisted of breakout sessions at six mapping tables with about twelve participants. Each table was equipped with an oversized map of the south shore, satellite images of potential launch sites, magic markers and map labels. Instructions for the mapping session were included on the agenda given to attendees at sign-in. One table explored West Bay, another table East Bay, and two tables reviewed Middle Bay and two tables South Oyster Bay. Participants utilized the maps to identify waterbody attributes including currents, hazards, boating conflicts and others. Participants were able to make specific recommendations regarding the launch sites, amenities and plot routes within the bay. Advisory Committee members helped to facilitate the discussion at each station. At the end of the one-hour breakout session, the meeting reconvened. Each table selected two to present their map and site recommendations to the audience. Notes were made directly on the maps and participants labeled the sites and map. The data from these notes and presentations has been tabulated and incorporated into the

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interactive online maps on the project website. Data from the route plotting maps is currently being transferred to digital maps and will also be available on the website.

Each group identified potential new blueway trail sites; a handful of landing-only stopovers and some overlooked places, plus improvements to existing launches and unsuitable or inaccessible sites. The site recommendations are publicly available on the interactive map on the project website [www.southshoreblueway.com](http://www.southshoreblueway.com). Recommended possible launch sites are outlined below:

#### West Bay

1. Bay Park (NC) where kayaks launch at the end of Marjorie Lane on the western shore, paved portage from parking lot to natural shore. There is a transient sailboat launch and launch ramp. Cautions: Shallow water on west side of park; glass and debris on the shore.
2. Long Beach Recreation Center Ramp (Long Beach) provides a good location, but NEEDS a floating dock or kayak specific access with lock up facility in order to visit amenities, which are a hiking trail and upland attractions. Caution for heavy traffic in Reynolds Channel.

#### Middle Bay

3. Shell Creek Park (TOH) offers a good location, but the shore is all bulkhead. Site would NEED a get-down or floating dock.
4. Oceanside Park (TOH) potential STOPOVER at small beach below the riprap on the southeastern edge of the park. Otherwise, park would need a get-down.
5. Baldwin Park (TOH) long portage from parking to launch into Parsonage Cove, but stay outside of the heavily trafficked boat channel about 100 yards out.
6. Waterfront Park (Freeport) a passive park, with a short natural shore on the quiet waters of Baldwin Bay, which has no motorboat traffic and 5 mph No Wake along southern shore of the park. Paddle in backwater, great wildlife viewing, Smith Island.
7. Sea Breeze Park (Freeport) stopover possibility, would need dedicated kayak dock
8. Long Beach Rec Center – (LB) Needs dedicated kayak launch & storage, lots of upland places to visit
9. East Marina (TOH) floating dock may be an alternative to the busy ramp at West Marina.

#### East Bay

10. Newbridge Park (TOH) long portage from parking down a paved path to access Canal Swamp Creek from the natural shore. Easier access right off parking lot with to eastern canal. This is a good location for access to Merrick Bay (Levy Park is a long paddle to the Bay), a popular kayak fishing area.

#### South Oyster Bay

11. Alhambra Road Beach (OB) best launch to South Oyster Bay; fear that access may be restricted.
12. Tobay Beach – a great site to launch but expensive nonresident parking, often used as stopover.

Other potential stopover points or new access, needing further investigation, include: Island Park Beach, Marine Nature Study Area, Head of Bellmore Creek at Merrick Road, small beach on town property at the west entrance to Baldwin Creek at Legion Rd., and Healey Beach. These were not sites originally reviewed as potential launch sites, but have been suggested by paddlers. Land ownership needs to be determined at Bellmore Creek and Legion Road.

**Hazards and User Conflicts:** Some common access problems and conflicts were identified by all groups, as were potential hazards. The main impediment to access that kept coming up at each table and had been the subject of numerous emails prior to the meeting, was the permitting and residency requirements from County, Town and Village sites. Going Coastal will be researching how this issue is handled by other water trails and will present the findings to the Advisory Committee as possible models.

Many existing launch sites are heavily used paved boat ramps where trailered motorboats are given access priority. The ramps are very busy on weekends, many restrict parking to residents and make paddlecraft wait until trailered powerboats have launched.

A conflict and safety issue identified is the excessive speed of jet skis around the back creeks and marsh islands, which is extremely dangerous in the winding maze of marsh and the boat wakes damage fragile habitat. Suggested that the areas be posted with buoys No Wake Zones limiting speed to 5 MPH and patrolled. Additional areas, such as Loop Pkwy to Swift Creek, should be 5 mph zones.

The primary caution to paddlers is to stay out of the boating channels. Trying to cross Reynolds Channel or State Channel is described as similar to walking across the LIE at rush hour. Traversing under all bridge crossings in all bays is hazardous where fast currents and eddies pose a major danger. These areas should be navigated only with the outgoing or incoming tides. The knowledge of tides is essential for paddling in the Bays Complex. Low tide is an issue in many of the back creeks and marsh islands where low water can make it impassable or prevent launch access, such as at Levy Park.

Freeport Historian, Cynthia Kreig and members of Long Island Traditions attended the meeting to discuss historical and upland connections, which we did not have time to discuss at this meeting. It was suggested that once initial paddler input phase pinpoints launch sites, we reach out to the historical and cultural organizations for input on the trail.

Zhennya Slootskin of Going Coastal described next steps and ways participants can remain involved and informed through the website and social media. Participants can subscribe to e-alerts, follow Facebook and get RSS feed of updates on the webpages to stay up to date on the Blueway Trail planning.

Experienced paddlers were enlisted as Launch Site Evaluators to perform in-water assessments of all sites in order to accurately explain and highlight cautions of existing and potential launch sites. The surveys will be set up on the project website and site assessments to “ground truth” launches from the paddlers perspective begin evaluating existing sites using the online field survey form from the project website.

Upcoming outreach events: April 16 - LI Paddler’s Meeting; April 28 - Empire Kayaks Grand Re-Opening

The meeting let out at 8:00 pm. The agenda for the stakeholder meeting is available on the project website, along with the workshop instructions and press.